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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

1. The Union Election Commission will be reconstituted and its mandated tasks, including the scrutiny of voter lists, shall be implemented in accordance with the law.
2. Effective measures will be taken with added momentum to prevent and manage the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Actions will be taken to ensure the speedy recovery of businesses from the impact of COVID-19.
4. Emphasis will be placed on achieving enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.
5. Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair multiparty democratic elections will be held in line with the 2008 Constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over State duties to the winning party in accordance with democratic standards.

State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Indian Ambassador to Myanmar



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Mr Saurabh Kumar, Ambassador of India to Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw on 16 December 2021.

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Indian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Saurabh Kumar, who had completed his tour of duty, at the parlour of the Office

of the Chairman of the State Administration Council in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

At the meeting, the Senior General expressed his condolences to late General Bipin Rawat, the Chief of Defence Staff of the

Indian Armed Forces, who lost his life in the recent helicopter crash in India. They exchanged views on friendly ties and cooperation measures between Myanmar and India, the assistance of India to Myanmar for prevention

of COVID-19, cooperation in bilateral trade and economic affairs, cooperation in other areas, including agriculture and livestock tasks, and cooperation in friendly relations, security and defence sectors between two armed forces

of both countries.

Also present at the meeting were Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo of the State Administration Council and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin.—MNA

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State Administration Council Press Release

Re-invitation to Myanmar citizens who reside in various regions for many reasons

1. Some student youths, State service personnel and citizens, with worries, have evaded to areas of EAOs and foreign countries due to the incitements and intimidation of NLD members, extremist followers, unlawful associations and terrorist groups such as CRPH and NUG, stimulation of CDM, and persons and organizations at home and abroad not wishing to restore peace and stability of the State since Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibilities on 1 February 2021.
2. They are further worried about the dictatorship statement and speeches of unlawful association and terrorist group CRPH and NUG, and some relevant persons. As they face no security guarantee and difficulties in socio-economic life in those areas, they wish to return to their native lands.
3. **The State Administration Council will specifically ease restrictions for service personnel, intellectuals and intelligentsia, and persons from various arenas and citizens who, with worries, absconded from the country except for persons who committed murders, robberies, setting fires, mine explosions and intentional attacks on security troops, those who crowded to attack public service personnel and some people, those who destroyed government and private-owned buildings and those who are highly involved in the CDM activities by providing monetary assistance and other means.**
4. As those who evade their native areas are also citizens, the State Administration Council will arrange their returns from the evaded areas to various parts of Myanmar.
5. As such, the information was released that if those who evaded to various areas, except for persons who committed any kinds of crime, wish to return to their native lands in Myanmar of their own accord due to multiple worries, the citizens abroad can contact nearby ward, village, township and district administration bodies and relevant embassies, military attaché offices and consulates in accord with the easing restrictions under the law.

Information Team
State Administration Council

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Daily import of anti-COVID-19 equipment runs as usual



Anti-Covid devices are loaded on the lorry to convey them to states and regions.

THE Ministry of Commerce is making efforts to ensure people have access to the essential medical supplies that are critical to the COVID-19 prevention, control and treat-

ment activities, including liquid oxygen and oxygen cylinders, by arranging continuous importation through trading posts, international airports and seaports.

Anti-COVID-19 equipment was imported by five companies using 10 vehicles. A total of 20 tonnes of liquid oxygen carried by one bowser, 50 empty oxygen cylinders, two home use oxygen concentrators, 3,440 PPE suits, 0.1 tonne of gloves and 57 tonnes of masks were imported via international seaports, the Muse 105th-mile trading zone, Myawady trading zone and Chinshwehaw trading camp yesterday.

One bowser carrying liquid oxygen arrived at Yangon from the Myawady trading zone.

Officials from the relevant departments are cooperating to facilitate and expedite the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) including online registration for the import process.

It is reported that the Ministry of Commerce is coordinating with relevant departments, treatment of COVID-19, as well as contact persons for inquiries can be reached through the Ministry's Website – www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA

Authorities continue accepting Myanmar nationals repatriated from abroad

MYANMAR officials have been welcoming returnees who are repatriated from abroad through respective land borders.

On 15 December, a total of 178 Myanmar nationals – 94 men and 84 women — returned home through Muse, northern Shan State, while six men and seven women returned to Chinshwehaw Township, and three men

and three women returned to Laukkai.

Healthcare professionals and members of the Tatmadaw medical team carried out the COVID-19 tests, provided documents required for quarantine, and explained the instructions of the Ministry of Health. Officials from the respective military commands and departments

provided necessary assistance as well.

The returnees were transported to their respective homes by buses arranged by the township administration bodies, and those who had been diagnosed with COVID-19 disease were sent to quarantine centres to get the necessary medical and administration support. — MNA



Returnees check in for the reception process.

Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanma Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit www.moi.gov.mm/mal, www.moi.gov.mm/km, www.moi.gov.mm/nlm and www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper.

News and Periodicals Enterprise

Generating hydropower

It is necessary to resurge manufacturing at home to be able to substitute the imported products. If the country saves the consumption of fuel oil, the amount for spending the foreign exchange will decline and the trade surplus will increase. The Senior General highlighted the salient points of reduction of fuel consumption, use of electricity, generating hydropower, and implementation of public transport projects.

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting 3/2021 of the Union Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 3-12-2021)

SAC members call for ancient heritage conservation in MraukU

STATE Administration Council Members Mahn Nyein Maung and U Moungh Har, accompanied by Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn and Deputy Minister U Zaw Aye Maung, discussed systematic conservation of ancient cultural heritage during their visit to MraukU from Sittway yesterday.

First, the SAC members observed ancient architecture and cultural heritage at Koethaung and Shitthaung stupas. They then urged officials to appreciate and conserve the 1,000-year-old language, literature and cultural heritage of the Rakhine people.

They also visited the museum and viewed artefacts displayed at the museum. They called on systematic prepara-



The members of the State Administration Council and Union ministers pose for the group documentary photo against the architecture and culture-rich pagoda in MraukU.

tions to catch tourist interest and conserve the cultural heritage.

The officials then went to Pawtawmu Yanpyay Manpyay Pagoda, Candamuni (Pawtaw-

mu) Sutaungpyae Maha Kyan Pagoda, built by King Canda Thuriya Sakka.

They met with the ethnic culture associations of Rakhine, Mro, Khami, Dainet and Thet in the evening.

During the meeting, SAC Member Mahn Nyein Maung called for open discussion regarding challenges in respective areas, and he said to write to him regarding the needs of locals and to cooperate in conserving the ethnic literature.

Then, SAC Member U Moungh Har highlighted the need to learn the respective ethnic languages not to occur disappearance from ethnicity and to follow the enacted laws.

Then, Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn, Deputy minister U Zaw Aye Maung and other officials coordinated the discussion.—MNA

MoH holds meeting on Omicron COVID-19 variant with respective ministries

A coordination meeting on the Omicron COVID-19 variant among the ministries was held yesterday morning at the Ministry of Health. The meeting was attended by Union minister for Health Dr Thet Khine Win, Union minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Htay Aung, Directors-General from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Transport and Communications, and the Ministry of Immigration and Population.

At the meeting, Union minister Dr Thet Khine Win said the Omicron COVID-19 variant has been spread in 85 countries and has also been found in Southeast Asia and the neighbouring countries of Myanmar. He said the Department of Medical Research and the Tatmadaw Medical Research Unit have been carrying out lab tests at the WHO accredited laboratories. So far, no Omicron virus has been found in the country, he continued. The third wave of COVID-19 has been successfully controlled

at present in Myanmar, with a daily detection rate of only 2 per cent, he said.

When the outbreak began to decline in the third wave of COVID-19, the Prime Minister instructed to take precautionary measures and to strictly enforce the COVID-19 rules and regulations, he continued. Since the WHO declared the Omicron variant, the Ministry of Health cooperated with respective ministries to ban visas for tourist arrivals from South African and Botswana under the guidance of the Central Committee for the Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19.

He called on the respective departments to discuss problems, weaknesses and needs that may arise in adapting existing policies to the nature of the disease. The vaccination was given priority to the hotel and tourism sector and factory operators in the target groups to minimize socio-economic impact due to COVID-19, and lockdown and hotel quarantines were fa-



MoH-organized inter-ministerial coordination meeting on Omicron in progress.

cilitated with the support of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, he added.

He urged the participants to discuss the prevention of the disease from the people who arrive through airways and borders and for the cooperation in carrying out control activities if the virus is found in the country.

The Union minister for Health added the impact on the hotels and tourism sector during

the previous COVID-19 waves and the need for each individual to comply with the disease prevention guidelines in living with the COVID-19 disease, as no one is safe until everyone is safe. He said his ministry will work together under the COVID-19 rules and regulations. Afterwards, the Directors-General from the respective ministries participated in the discussion.

Deputy minister for Health

Prof Dr Aye Tun said the Omicron variant can enter Myanmar at any time as it has been found in the neighbouring countries and it is necessary to delay the infection as much as possible. He said policies, guidelines and changes relevant to the new variant will be made in a timely manner and respective departments will be notified in due course.—MNA

SAC member Daw Aye Nu Sein, MoE Union minister inspect schools in Sittway Township

STATE Administration Council Member Daw Aye Nu Sein, Union Minister for Education Dr Nyunt Pe and Rakhine State Minister for Economy U San Shwe Maung went to No (2) BEHS in Sittway yesterday.

During the visit, they urged the teachers to work together for the development of schools and teach the students to produce educated youths, and they instructed the necessary things regarding the cleanliness of school compounds and fulfilment of

school buildings, computers and playgrounds.

The SAC member and the Union minister also inspected Bauktheesu BEPS, North Yupa BEPS, Tayathee BEPS and Makyemyaing BEHS Branch in Sittway Township.

Similarly, the Union minister made school inspection tours around No (3) BEHS, No (5) BEHS, No (7) BEMS and Kyaungtatlan basic education post-primary school in Sittway on 14 and 15 December. —MNA



The SAC member, Union minister and party tours one of the classrooms in Sittway Township.

MIFER Union minister meets Power China International Group Ltd

UNION Minister U Aung Naing Oo of the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations received guests from Power China International Group Limited, China and discussed investment matters.

During the meeting, the Union minister welcomed the investment plan proposed by Power China and had cordial discussions. — MNA

White paper on safety, security in tourism virtually launched



THE Launching of the White Paper on Safety and Security in Tourism jointly organized by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), was held virtually

on 15 December and Myanmar, a member of the UNWTO, attended the ceremony.

Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Htay Aung, along with officials and subject experts participated in the discussion through videoconferencing. In his address, Secretary-General of the UNWTO

Mr Zurab Pololikashvili said these are guidelines for the resumption of international tourism, reopening of international borders and the resumption of safe tourism. He called on the member countries to work together in the resumption of tourism. He said the guidelines in the paper will support

crisis management in tourist destinations and will build a resilient tourism industry in reviving the tourism sector. He also added that the UNWTO has plans to hold both online and offline training courses and workshops on the implementation of the paper in 2022.

Vice-Chairman of the International Affairs at Amaran International Mr Didier Ranchon explained the white paper and discussed practical information. Afterwards, the participants asked questions and the Regional Director of the UNWTO for Africa concluded.

The UNWTO and international experts conducted field surveys in countries such as Africa, Morocco, Mauritius, Mexico, the Philippines, Portugal, Senegal, Sri Lanka and Tunisia for the paper, and guidelines were set for addressing tourism safety issues

for member countries of the UNWTO and to assist in the formation of disaster prevention plans in the government and private sectors.

In the afternoon, the Union minister met officials from State guesthouses and hotels at Park Royal Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw. During the meeting, he spoke about the spread of the Omicron COVID-19 variant across the world including in neighbouring countries and the need for staff in the tourism industry to comply with the set prevention guidelines individually. He also said that it is necessary for the hotels which will receive guests who come and stay for Mini-Gems Emporium 2021 to strictly follow the COVID-19 rules and regulations set by the Ministry of Health, and he urged hotels to focus on applying for COVID-19 national certificates for safe services.—MNA

211 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 16 December, total figure rises to 527,714

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 527,714 after 211 new cases were reported on 16 December 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 504,482 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,201 after 4 died.—MNA

Rakhine traditional wrestling contest marks 47th Rakhine State Day



Prize-awarding ceremony. **PHOTOS : TIN TUN (IPRD)**



Rakhine traditional wrestling contests are in action.

THE Rakhine traditional wrestling competition was held to commemorate the 47th Rakhine State Day yesterday in Sittway, Rakhine State.

The competitors at respective levels competed and the winners were awarded cash prizes and medals by Commander of the Western

Command Maj-Gen Htin Latt Oo and Rakhine State Chief Minister Dr Aung Kyaw Min.

Cash prizes ranged from K3.2 million, K2.4 million, and K1.6 million for the first, second and joint-third winners of Gold Gong level and K2.4 million, K1.6 million and K1.2 million for those of Silver Gong

level. It was reported that a total of 288 competitors at the Silver Gong level and 21 competitors at the Gold Gong level from Rakhine State participated in the competition which was held to commemorate the 47th Rakhine State Day. — Tin Tun (IPRD)/GNLM



Rainforest helps enhance livelihood of forest communities

THE villages which are next to the river in Waw, Thanatpin and Kawa townships, have been experiencing riverbank erosion, causing agricultural land loss.

Bago Region Chief Minister U Myo Swe Win discussed this matter at a coordination meeting of the Coastal Resource Management Committee on 15 December to mitigate the land loss.

The meeting highlighted those matters to prevent riverbank erosion, maintain the natural habitat of the rainforest along Sittoung River and the Gulf of Mottama, administer those rainforests in compliance with a law, establish the protected areas and forest land for the communities and establish the rainforest areas in certain places. The rainforest can help improve the sustainable livelihood of the forest communities and

conserve the aquaculture resources. Additionally, it will also stop riverbank erosion.

Afterwards, Bago region minister for the Natural Resource Affairs U Tin Thein also pointed out the benefits of coastal resource conservation. The director of the Bago Region Forest Department also explained the working process of the coastal resource management committee.

U Than Htike Aung, the project manager of the Gulf of Mottama, elaborated on the socio-economic development activities for the residents in Kawa, Thanatpin and Waw townships. The committee members also discussed some matters and the regional chief minister instructed them to meet their individual needs. — MNA



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Yangon gold market trades up to 50 visses of gold daily

YANGON gold market is trading up to 50 visses (a viss equals 1.6 kg) of gold daily, said Chair U Myo Myint of Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA).

“The trade of gold in the market is back to normal. Now, about 50 visses of gold are being traded daily,” U Myo Myint clarified.

Besides, the raw gold metals are vastly entering the gold market, he added.

“Now, our Myanmar gold market is operating as usual and the raw materials are also supplied from gold mining. When all the shops are reopened, the old gold scraps will be come back as raw materials. About 50 visses of gold are back to the shops as old gold scraps daily. Those old gold scraps are refined into pure gold bars and then about 50 visses of gold are resold in the market dai-



Currently, the pure gold price is about K1,793,000 per tical (0.578 ounce or 0.016 kilogramme) on 16 December in the domestic market while global gold price touches a high of above US\$ 1,781 per ounce. Further, the dollar to kyat exchange rate was at K1,780 per dollar on 16 December.

ly. Another thing is that the goods from Mandalay and Mawlamyine are coming back to the market. Now, we got a lot of gold in the market,” said U Myo Myint.

In last September, there has been a lot of demand in the gold market due to the depreciation of the kyat against the dollar, hence the gold purchase orders were

accepted appointment system.

The pure gold price was up to K 2,220,500 per tical (0.578 ounce or 0.016 kilogramme) in September in the domestic

market, while the US dollar exchange rate touches a high of above US\$ 3,000 per dollar.

To regulate unsustainable rally in the domestic gold market, the association called for the members to make the gold transaction with only immediate payment, avoid the verbal transactions over calls and halt trading outside the Yangon region, according to YGEA.

The fluctuation of the domestic gold price is depending upon the global gold price and US dollar exchange rate. Currently, the pure gold price is about K1,793,000 per tical (0.578 ounce or 0.016 kilogramme) on 16 December in the domestic market while global gold price touches a high of above US\$ 1,781 per ounce. Further, the dollar to kyat exchange rate was at K1,780 per dollar on 16 December. — NN/GNLM

Palm oil price on downward trend tracking Kyat revaluation



The price hit a record high of K5,000 per viss in late September. And it fell to K4,450 per viss in October-end. The price remained low at K4,270 per viss in mid-December.

THE price of palm oil plummeted to K4,270 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilogrammes) at present, following the Kyat revaluation on the US dollar in the local forex market, according to the domestic market.

The price hit a record high of K5,000 per viss in late September. And it fell to K4,450 per viss in October-end. The price remained low at K4,270 per viss in mid-December.

The drop in palm oil price is related to the Kyat appreciation against the US dollar. A dollar was valued at below K1,800 at present, whereas it hit an all-time high of over K3,000 per viss in late September.

To tackle with price high in the palm oil sector tracking the dollar gains, over the past two months, over 25,000 tonnes of palm oil were sold at the subsidized rate, which is equivalent to \$31 million that the oil

importers directly purchased at the reference rate from the Central Bank of Myanmar, according to the Consumer Affairs Department under the Ministry of Commerce.

The association is trying not to occur unnecessary issues regarding edible oil amid the global pandemic impacts.

Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers' Association is attempting to maintain price stability, prevent market manipulation, import palm oil from foreign countries sustainably for self-sufficiency and distribute the edible oil at a fairer price to the consumers.

The domestic consumption of edible oil is estimated at 1 million tonnes per year. The local cooking oil production is just about 400,000 tonnes. To meet the self-sufficiency in the domestic market, about 700,000 tonnes of cooking oil are yearly imported. — GNLM

CBM sells \$15 mln on 15 December

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) has announced that they have sold US\$15 million on 15 December 2021 at an auction market rate, bringing a total number of sales of \$43 million in December three times.

The bank sold up to \$325.8 million in foreign exchange auctions from February to November, the highest amount in October at \$110 million, according to CBM.

The Central Bank of Myanmar sold \$6.8 million worth of dollars in a foreign exchange auction in February 2021, but not in March, \$12 million in

April, \$24 million in May, \$12 million in June, \$39 million in July and \$28 million units in August.

The Central Bank of Myanmar sold \$15 million on 13 September, \$8 million on 15 September, \$15 million on 20 September, \$10 million on 22 September and \$15 million on 27 September.

The Central Bank of Myanmar sold \$30 million on 1 November and \$1 million on 30 November.

The CBM is conducting an auction for foreign exchange to reduce the fluctuation of foreign exchange rates in a

short-term period and fulfilling the needs of foreign exchange reserves.

Rules and directives have been set out for the CBM's auctions.

Following these rules and directives, the CBM is trading the foreign currency with three State-owned banks, 19 local private banks and 13 foreign banks, which are holding authorized dealer-AD licences.

This CBM's move is aimed at governing the market volatility and strengthening the local currency value. — Aye Maung/GNLM



Central Bank of Myanmar.

Bangladesh marks 50 years since liberation war victory

HUGE crowds paid tribute to Bangladesh's war heroes on Thursday as the country marked 50 years since its triumphant victory in a devastating independence war.

December 16 is celebrated each year as Victory Day for the moment Pakistani soldiers surrendered en masse to Indian and Bangladeshi forces, bringing an end to the nine-month conflict that claimed as many as three million lives.

Veterans who lost their limbs in the war laid wreaths at the National Martyrs' Memorial, a concrete monument near the capital symbolising the campaign against Pakistani rule, before thousands of solemn observers.

Women across the country wore saris of green and red, matching the national flag, as



Veterans who lost their limbs in the war laid wreaths at the National Martyrs' Memorial. PHOTO: AFP

they watched local concerts where musicians performed the country's patriotic songs. Bang-

ladesh has held celebrations throughout the year to mark the golden anniversary of its inde-

pendence, though some events were called off because of the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP ■

Indian gov't clears proposal to raise marriage age of women from 18 to 21



The decision to increase the marriageable age among women was reportedly made during a cabinet meeting on Wednesday. PHOTO: PTI/ANI

INDIA'S federal government has cleared a proposal to increase the minimum age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 years, local media reports said Thursday.

The decision to increase the

marriageable age among women was reportedly made during a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

Currently, the minimum age of marriage for men is 21 and for women, it is 18. With the

move, the legal age of marriage for women now will be the same as men.

"Following the cabinet's approval, the government will introduce an amendment to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, and consequently bring amendments to the Special Marriage Act, 1954 and personal laws such as the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955," said a local newspaper quoting government sources.

Reports said Wednesday's cabinet clearance is based on recommendations submitted to the Indian government's top policy think tank — the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog (commission) — by a task force constituted to examine matters pertaining to age of motherhood, imperatives of

lowering maternal mortality rate, and improvement of nutritional levels. The recommendations on the proposal mooted by the task force, set up in June last year, stressed a woman must be at least 21 years old at the time of first pregnancy.

The task force has also recommended that a comprehensive public awareness campaign be chalked out to encourage social acceptance of the decision.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned the proposal during his Independence Day speech last year. "This government is constantly concerned about the health of daughters and sisters. To save the daughters from malnutrition, it is necessary that they're married at the right age," Modi said. — Xinhua ■

'Beautiful laws' fail South Africa's queer migrants

KENYAN asylum seeker Pallo Mandela dreamt of freedom on his seven-day bus journey to South Africa. His brother had found him in bed with a man, and now he was fleeing for his life.

"He became very wild and very toxic," said the 27-year-old, conjuring the painful memories from a small suburban house outside Pretoria, where he now lives.

"He came with a bottle to hit my head and said he was going to kill me," said Mandela, who arrived in South Africa in February 2020.

Gay sex is banned in Kenya,

and the police arrested him on the spot. Days later, queer activists paid bribes for his release and told him to "disappear".

"The only option I had was to come to South Africa," Mandela told AFP.

"That was the only safe space where I knew the government accommodated queer people."

With some of the world's most progressive LGBTQ+ laws, South Africa attracts queer migrants from the continent and beyond escaping prosecution and homophobia.

The country in 1996 was the first to constitutionally ban dis-



Zambian refugee activist Anold Mulaisho (C) marched at Pretoria Pride, an event underlining how South Africa has some of the world's most progressive LGBTQ+ laws. PHOTO: AFP

crimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

In 2006, it became the only nation to legalize same-sex

marriage in Africa, where social codes are often conservative and many countries consider homosexuality a crime. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Intel announces \$7 billion investment plan in Malaysia

U.S. chip giant Intel Corp. will invest \$7 billion to expand its plants in Malaysia amid a global semiconductor shortage, Chief Executive Officer Pat Gelsinger said Thursday.

Gelsinger, who is visiting Malaysia from Wednesday, told reporters in Kuala Lumpur that his company will invest more than 30 billion ringgit over the next decade for expanding two assembly and test facilities, setting up a packaging plant and other projects in Malaysia.

Besides Malaysia, Intel, a top global chipmaker, is expected to announce by early next year an expansion of its plants in the United States and Europe, Gelsinger said, adding the semiconductor shortage is still quite significant.

"And if you think about the semiconductor industry that was growing at about 5 percent per year before COVID-19 in a \$500 billion industry, COVID-19 disrupted the supply chains while demand exploded at 20 per cent year-on-year as we are seeing this digitization of everything," he said. — Kyodo ■

Swiss museum orders experts to review Nazi-era art collection

EXPERTS will review the methods used to determine the provenance of works in a vast private art collection acquired during World War II by Emil Bührle, a Swiss museum said Wednesday.

The announcement by the Kunsthhaus in Zurich came as renewed suspicions swirl around the Nazi-era origins of one of Europe's most prestigious private art collections.

The late industrialist (1890-1956) amassed a fortune selling weapons to both the Nazis and the Allies during World War II, wealth that helped buy around 600 artworks by the end of his life. The Bührle Foundation itself confirms that 13 paintings bought by the German-born industrialist, who later acquired Swiss citizenship, had been stolen by the Nazis from Jewish owners in France. — AFP ■

Struggle from corruption problems for shaping better societies

THE single word "corruption" is a severely destructive weapon to deteriorate society. Only when all members of the society avoid the acts of corruption but take the measures of anti-corruption will the whole society enjoy the fruits of peace and tranquillity.

The service personnel on the duty of the State in all sectors need to avoid the acts leading to corruption and focus on the public interests only. The act of bribery is a primary root cause of corruption. In fact, corruption is based on desire, anger, fear and ignorance.

Public participation plays a crucial role in the implementation of the anti-corruption strategies in scrutinizing the corruption problems and beefing up the reform process. It is important that any programmes to reduce corruption cases must admit all the persons who had faced losses in corruption. It is necessary to mention the directives, rules and regulations understandable for the people.

cases rather than now. In order to emerge a righteous and honest culture in the society, only when the people in individuals participate in the anti-corruption measures will their workplaces and environs be shaped as a society with honesty free from corruption.

Public participation plays a crucial role in the implementation of the anti-corruption strategies in scrutinizing the corruption problems and beefing up the reform process. It is important that any programmes to reduce corruption cases must admit all the persons who had faced losses in corruption. It is necessary to mention the directives, rules and regulations understandable for the people.

The global countries are packing the burden of corruption till today. But, those countries, including Myanmar, should struggle with the corruption problems as much as possible for shaping better societies respectively.



What is the Internet?

By U Khin Maung (A retired diplomat)

(CONTINUATION FROM THE PREVIOUS ARTICLE ...)

The Internet is the world's largest computer network. It is not a piece of software or hardware. It's a huge collection of computers, cables, and people. When people talk about the Internet, they generally aren't thinking of the physical computers, wires, routers and other gadgets that compose the network, but of the collection of people, software, and tools that they "see" online.

To the technically minded, the Internet is a network of computer networks that talk to each other using Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) Internet Protocol (IP). TCP/IP is a set of rules that define how messages can be sent between computers. A communications protocol allows different kinds of computers using different operating systems to communicate with each other. That is important because the Internet isn't made up of any single type of computer system. Using TCP/IP, hundreds of different types of computers are able to communicate on the internet.

This common set of protocols makes it possible for a user plugged into any network on the Internet to communicate with

people or software based on any of the other networks connected to the Internet.

To most of the people who use the Internet, the Net isn't about networks, protocols, and operating systems; it's a community of people. A very large community, which we might even call "a global village".

The Internet is a locale, a place. It is the closest thing we've got to "Cyberspace", which is an electronic place where people and programs work, learn and coexist (sometimes peacefully, sometimes not.)

Source, "Your Internet Consultant PP 1 & 2 - By Mr Kevin Savetz

Internet-related terms and their definitions

- 1. Within the last few years, the term "the Internet" has slipped into everyday language, invading our newspapers, magazines and even our TV sets. Loosely defined, the Internet is an international network - or rather a network of networks - at the heart of which lies a number of powerful and permanently linked computers. To join the Internet, you connect

your computer to any of these computers, and are then able to talk to, and disseminate information to, every other computer on the Internet. Significant terms and their definitions.

- 2. In this write-up, I would like to present only a few significant Internet-related terms and their definitions as follows:

- (A) WWW = World Wide Web. It is probably the largest method of information dispersal on the Internet today.
(B) Protocol = It is an agreed standard for network devices to exchange information with each other.
(C) HTTP = HyperText Transfer Protocol. It is the method by which the web page data is transmitted.
(D) NNTP = It stands for Network News Transfer Protocol.
(E) Website = Website means the Internet store-fronts that may stay open continuously for business.
(F) Web page = It is a page in the website al-

located for the Internet user or the Internet company concerned.

(G) Home Page = It is the first page of a set of pages.

(H) Download = Transfer of files/data/ from one computer system to another (for copying/ receiving)

(I) E-mail = It's a correspondence system by which you can transmit text, pictures, sounds and other digitized material across the world in a matter of seconds.

(J) Newbie = A new user, who probably doesn't know a lot about the Internet

(K) Users' Network = It's known by several different names- e.g. "usenet" "news" "newsgroups"

(L) Node = Any device that is individually identifiable 10 a network.

(M) Binaries = Binaries are not texts or files. They are pictures programmes.

(N) Netiquette = Network etiquette a cultural code of conduct, a dignified, but not universally agreed standard of behaviour

expected on the Internet.

(O) Hacker = A technically savvy/wise computer enthusiast who derives joy from exploring other people's computer systems, although not necessarily with intent to damage.

(P) Upload = To send files/data from one computer system to another.

(Q) Cyberspace = It's the electronic infrastructure of the late 20th century. Cyberspace encompasses a virtual universe of ideas and information.

(R) Software = We have two kinds of software.

(A) Freeware

(B) Shareware

(S) Freeware = Free of charge. You can download some files and information from the Internet without any payment for them.

(T) Shareware = You can use and try out some files and information from the Internet for a specified period of time - free of charge. After that, you have to make some payment to use it.

3. In conclusion. I would like to express my view

that the "Internet" is not merely a dot.com fad that will come and go. It's a tool of the digital revolution, a part of our daily life. It will keep ongoing. The Internet, in fact, is a great thing on which we can do so many cool things.

Definitions

(1) Dispersal (N) d i s - perse (V)

Disperse = Scatter, drive. go or send in different directions, send to or station at different points. (2) Transmit (Vt) = pass on, hand on, transfer, communicate

(3) Fad (N) = craze, peculiar notion.

(4) Cool (Adj) = (Slang) = very good, pleasant, excellent.

Sources

(1) Your Internet consultant by Mr Kevin Savetz

(2) Internet culture in easy steps by John Smith.

(3) Compuspeak (B.B.C)



COVID-19 leads to over 50 million more hungry people in Asia-Pacific

COVID-19 led to rising food insecurity for around 54 million people living in the vast Asia-Pacific region during 2020, according to a joint UN agency report published on 15 December

THE Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)'s 2021 Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition also pointed out that as hunger increased, so too did access to sufficiently nutritious food.

Overall, more than 375 million in the region faced hunger during 2020, up from around 321 million in 2019.

Both agencies said that high levels of poverty continue to hold healthy diets out of reach for 1.8 billion people, while more than one billion did not have access to adequate food in 2020 - an increase of almost 150 billion in just 12 months.

Hunger and poor nutrition levels in Asia and the Pacific in 2019 were already concerning, but the pandemic has made this drastically worse, UNICEF and FAO insisted, before adding that even countries that had initially reported a limited num-



COVID-19 has added an additional level of uncertainty for both farmers and farm workers. PHOTO: AFP

ber of COVID-19 cases had suffered the negative effects of containment measures.

COVID affect

In recent years, progress has stalled in reducing the number of undernourished, as witnessed in children under age five - more of whom are experiencing stunting.

And the coronavirus crisis has exacerbated that negative trend.

"While it is not yet possible to fully quantify the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, clearly it has had a serious impact across the region", FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative Jong-Jin Kim and UNICEF acting Regional Director for East Asia and the Pacific Marcolui Corsi said in the foreword.

"Even countries that initially reported a limited number of COVID-19 cases

experienced the negative effects of the containment measures, combined with people's health concerns, that led to a major contraction of economic activity around the globe". Since then, the situation has worsened as disruption to food supply chains added to the problems.

Looking ahead

As bad as it is, the situation could have been even worse without the social protection measures put in place by Governments during the crisis.

"In building back better, future agri-food systems will have to provide better production, better nutrition, a better environment and better livelihoods", the FAO and UNICEF Directors said. To do that, the UN agencies stressed that the needs of small-scale, family farmers and indigenous people in the region must be met.

SOURCE: UN

Myanmar Gazette

Appointment of Heads of Service Organizations

The State Administration Council has appointed the following persons as Heads of Service Organizations shown against each of their names on probation from the date they assume charge of their duties.

Name	Appointment
(1) Dr Ei Ei Oo Deputy Director-General Monitoring and Evaluation Department Ministry of Science and Technology	Director-General Monitoring and Evaluation Department Ministry of Science and Technology
(2) Dr Su Su Dwe Deputy Director-General Department of Traditional Medicine Ministry of Health	Director-General Department of Traditional Medicine Ministry of Health

Letter to the Editors

We live in a fallen world

WE live in a fallen world, has to be content with sickness sorrow evil and death. Based on the current situation that is happening in the world feel like the future is uncertain and that the world is ending up being a sad place with war hate and unfairness.

It is true that today's world continues to experience physical bondage and spiritual exile as persecution conflict and war millions of people have been forced to flee their homes and loved ones. The UN high commissioner for refugees states "No one becomes a refugee by choice but the rest of us can have a choice about how to help people who are looking for.

Human beings naturally want to be at HOPE-PEACE-LOVE and JOY in balance. Therefore, JESUS was born in BETHLEHEM to save the WORLD at CHRISTMAS. Therefore, CHRISTMAS is a sign of PEACE & HOPE for those who are suffering: CHRISTMAS is a sign of FREEDOM & JOY for the poor and oppressed: CHRISTMAS is a sign of MERCY & LOVE for those caught up and for those who feel lonely and abandoned.

So, let us not forget the situation that we are living in and to remember those who may have very little or who could need your help Please do that at this CHRISTMAS season. Because JESUS-CHRIST wants PEACE on EARTH & GOODWILL to ALL.

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR.

By: K.L.Paul

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Thursday 16 December, 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is cloudy over the South Andaman Sea and South Bay and a few cloud to partly cloudy over the North Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal. FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 17 December, 2021: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Mandalay, Magway, Taninthayi Regions and Northern Shan, Rakhine States. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin, (Southern and Eastern) Shan, Chin, Kayin, Mon States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

Brands from Ferrari to Nike rush toward 'metaverse' future



Big brands are rushing to platforms like Roblox as they look toward the metaverse vision for a virtual reality internet. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE metaverse vision for the internet is far from reality, but brands from Ferrari to Nike are already rushing in to experiment and build an audience, in part for fear of missing out.

The clamor over virtual goods comes amid feverish predictions that the metaverse — a virtual reality version of the internet — will eventually replace the web of today.

But some virtual worlds, for example the Fortnite and Minecraft games or the Roblox platform, are already open for business.

“I think a lot of it is experimentation,” said Ryan Mullins, founder of virtual sneaker app Aglet. “If it turns out that we make a couple of grand or something like that... great, but I think a lot of (companies) are thinking ‘innovate, disrupt or die,’” he added, echoing a Silicon Valley ethos of sometimes brutal evolution. Fashion has been at the forefront, with a line of digital clothing from Uniqlo on Minecraft or Balenciaga outfits and sneakers available in Fortnite.

Designers are also entering the new field of NFTs — non-fun-

gible tokens that are unique digital objects such as drawings or animations.

“This represents a massive opportunity for brands, who will get in early and will be able to build persistent presence... on a truly global scale,” said Christina Wootton, vice president of partnerships at Roblox.

Welcome to 'Nikeland'

During the Halloween holiday, Mexican fast-food chain Chipotle opened a virtual and ephemeral restaurant on Roblox, the first of its kind.— AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Forgotten' animals rescued after Indonesia volcano eruption

As rescuers comb the ash-covered landscape looking for people after Indonesia's Mount Semeru erupted earlier this month, volunteers are searching for even more vulnerable survivors: cats, cows and other animals.

The disaster killed 48 people, according to the latest toll, and rescuers are still seeking bodies in the mud and rubble.

As deadly ash destroyed villages in East Java's Lumajang district, at least 767 cows also died, while 648 sheep were killed in sheds and thousands of chickens were buried by the mudflow, according to authorities.—AFP ■

Volcanic eruption on Spanish island shows signs of ending

A volcanic eruption on the Spanish island of La Palma has shown its first sign it might be coming to an end after nearly three months, scientists said Wednesday, although they could not rule out a new flare up in activity.

The eruption of the Cumbre Viejo volcano has ebbed and flowed since it first began spewing lava on 19 September, forcing the evacuation of over 7,000 people and destroying nearly 3,000 buildings.

But since Monday evening seismic activity has been very weak, there is no lava flow and the volcano is only “sporadically” releasing smoke, said the director of Spain's National Geographic Institute in the Canary Islands, Maria Jose Blanco.—AFP ■

Tens of thousands flee as super typhoon hits the Philippines

THOUSANDS of people in the Philippines fled their homes and beachfront resorts as super typhoon Rai slammed into the country Thursday, with a charity warning the storm could hit coastal communities “like a freight train”.

Rai was packing maximum sustained winds of 195 kilometres (120 miles) an hour as it made landfall on the southern island of Siargao at 1:30 pm (0530 GMT), the state weather forecaster said.

It is the strongest storm to hit the disaster-prone country this year.

“This monster storm is frightening and threatens to hit coastal communities like a freight train,” said Alberto Bocanegra, head of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the Philippines.

“We are very concerned that climate change is making typhoons more ferocious and



Domestic tourists visiting the country's famed beaches and dive spots ahead of Christmas were among those seeking emergency shelter. **PHOTO: AFP**

unpredictable.”

The weather bureau warned “very destructive” winds could cause “heavy to very heavy damage to structures and vegetation”, along with widespread flooding and rain-induced landslides.

More than 90,000 people sought emergency shelter as the storm charged across the Pacific

Ocean, disaster agencies said.

Evacuations were still under way in areas in the typhoon's path. Among the evacuees were domestic tourists visiting the country's famed beaches and dive spots ahead of Christmas.

Foreign travellers are still banned from entering the Philippines under Covid-19 restrictions.—AFP ■

Operator of leaking California pipeline charged with negligence

THE operators of a California pipeline that leaked crude oil on to beaches south of Los Angeles in early October were charged Wednesday with negligence by federal prosecutors.

The charges were leveled against Amplify Energy, a Texas company operating the pipeline off Huntington Beach, and two of its subsidiaries — Beta Operating Co. and San Pedro Bay Pipeline Co., according to the prosecutor's statement.

The authorities accuse them of not having reacted appropriately to alarms warning of the leak, which sounded eight times over a period of 13 hours.

Despite the alarms, the operators repeatedly restarted the pipeline when it should have remained shut down because of the leak, prosecutors said.

“The pipeline, which was used to transfer crude oil from several offshore facilities to a processing plant in Long Beach,

began leaking on the afternoon of 1 October, but the defendants allegedly continued to operate the damaged pipeline, on and off, until the next morning,” the statement said.

“As a result of the allegedly negligent conduct, what is estimated to be about 25,000 gallons of crude oil were discharged from a point approximately 4.7 miles west of Huntington Beach from a crack in the 16-inch pipeline,” it added.—AFP ■



People sit on beach chairs as a cleanup crew works on the beach on 7 Oct 2021 in Newport Beach, Calif. Beaches normally thronged with surfers and sunbathers are deserted as California races to clean up a huge oil spill. **PHOTO: FREDERIC J. BROWN, AFP**

Omicron could become dominant in Europe by mid-January

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday warned the Omicron variant of Covid-19 could become dominant in Europe next month, but said her 27-nation bloc had ample vaccines to fight the pandemic.

“If you look at the time it takes for new cases to double in number, it seems to be doubling every two or three days. And that’s massive. We’re told that by mid-January, we should expect Omicron to be the new dominant variant in Europe,” von der Leyen told the European Parliament, pointing to scientific data.

“But over the last year, we’ve worked hard and we’ve achieved a great deal and that is why Europe is in a better position now to fight the virus,” she said.



The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) confirmed that 10 people have been hospitalized with the Omicron variant in England. **PHOTO: AFP**

Von der Leyen insisted there were “enough vaccine doses for every European now” as EU

countries push to deliver booster jabs to combat the rapidly spreading Omicron variant.

“We’re now in a position to produce 300 million doses of the vaccine per month here in Europe,” she said.

“We have contracts that ensure that we’ll receive vaccines once they’re adapted to the new variant as soon as possible. And we’re told that it’ll take around 100 days to adapt the vaccines we have.”

So far, 66.6 per cent of the EU population have had two doses of a Covid-19 vaccine and 62 million had received a third booster jab, she said. She said that “the most important important thing now” is to increase overall vaccination rates, including among children, and the bloc needed to step up the battle to overcome “vaccine scepticism”.—AFP ■

EU regulator says J&J Covid vaccine can be used as booster

THE European Medicines Agency said Wednesday that Johnson & Johnson’s Covid vaccine can be used as a booster shot two months after the first dose was administered, or after receiving other mRNA shots.

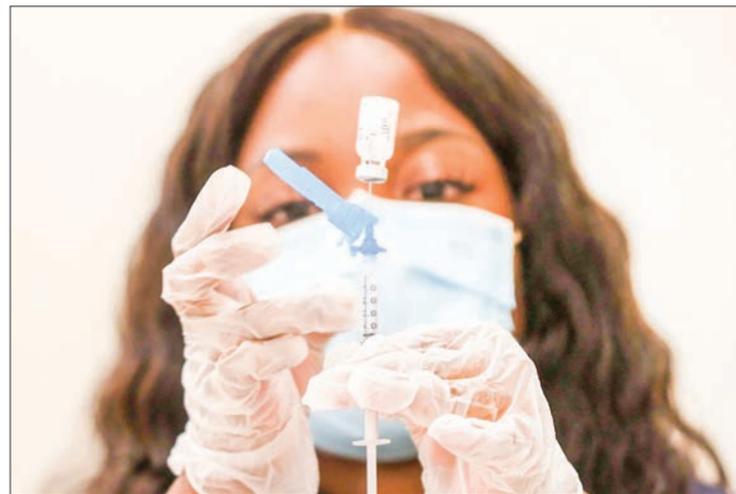
“EMA’s human medicines committee (CHMP) has concluded that a booster dose of Covid-19 vaccine Janssen may be considered at least two months after the first dose in people aged 18 years and above,” the watchdog said in a statement, sing the vaccine’s

commercial name.

This is the third vaccine after Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna that the Amsterdam-based agency has approved for a booster for adults.

“A booster dose with Covid-19 vaccine Janssen may be given after two doses of one of the mRNA vaccines authorised in the EU,” it added.

It said it was closely monitoring possible side effects, which it had not currently been reported. “The risk of thrombosis in com-



A health worker prepares a dose of the one-shot Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccine in Los Angeles, California, on Thursday. **PHOTO: AFP**

bination with thrombocytopenia (TTS) or other very rare side effects after a booster is not known and is being carefully monitored.”

Some governments are urg-

ing citizens to get booster shots as Covid cases are on the rise again globally, including in several European countries battling fresh waves.—AFP ■

Over 65s without booster to lose France Covid pass



A staff member flashes the QR code on a fan’s Covid-19 health pass before the start of the French L1 football match between Stade Rennais Football Club and RC Lens at Roazhon Park Stadium in Rennes, northwestern France, on 8 August 2021. **PHOTO: JEAN-FRANÇOIS MONIER/ AFP**

FRANCE on Wednesday begins implementing a new tightening of rules in the fight against Covid-19, meaning people aged 65 and over will lose the validity of their health pass unless they have had a third booster shot.

The health pass was introduced in the summer and makes full vaccination against Covid-19, a recent recovery or negative test obligatory for visiting any restaurant or cafe, inter-city train travel and going to cultural venues like cinemas or museums.

Championed by President Emmanuel Macron as he eyes re-election in 2022, the health

pass is widely seen as being a success, despite initial protests, by encouraging people who were hesitant to become vaccinated.

The government says some 400,000 people aged 65 and over who are eligible for the booster shot have yet to take it, which is 12 per cent of those aged 80 and above and 10 per cent of those aged 65 to 79.

People in the 65 plus age group who have failed to take up the booster shot will see the QR code in their health pass generated by a mobile phone app automatically dis-activated.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

US crosses 800,000

Covid-19 deaths

THE United States, the country hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic, crossed 800,000 Covid-19 deaths on Tuesday, a tracker maintained by Johns Hopkins University showed.

The figure is greater than the entire population of several states, including North Dakota and Alaska.

Around 450,000 of the deaths occurred in 2021, despite highly effective vaccines that were first authorized in December 2020 and widely available by springtime.

The vast majority of the deaths have been among the unvaccinated.

“As we mark the tragic milestone of 800,000 American deaths due to Covid-19, we remember each person and the lives they lived, and we pray for the loved ones left behind,” President Joe Biden said in a statement.—AFP ■

Canadians urged not to travel abroad over Omicron

THE Canadian government on Wednesday urged citizens to avoid foreign travel over the Christmas holidays, saying the Covid-19 Omicron variant “makes us fear the worst,” including soaring infections and travel disruptions.

The travel advisory will be re-evaluated in four weeks, but public health restrictions could be imposed in the interim if the pandemic situation worsens, officials told a news conference.

“Our government is officially advising Canadians to avoid non-essential travel outside Canada,” Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos told a news conference.

“Those who are planning to travel, I say very clearly: Now is not the time to travel. The rapid spread of the Covid variant on the global scale makes us fear the worst,” he said. “Travelling Canadians could contract the virus or get stranded abroad.” At an emergency meeting late Tuesday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had proposed closing the border, but the measure was roundly rejected by provincial leaders, a source told AFP.—AFP ■

Japan to contribute record 376 bil. yen to World Bank fund for poor



Japan will contribute a record 376.7 billion yen (\$3.4 billion) to the International Development Association, a World Bank fund for the poorest nations, in a bid to help such countries recover from the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic. **PHOTO: WORLD BANK/KYODO**

JAPAN will contribute a record 376.7 billion yen (\$3.4 billion) to the International Development Association, a World Bank fund for the poorest nations, in a bid to help such countries recover from the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic, the Finance Ministry said Thursday.

The IDA will use its funds to provide assistance to 74 low-income countries such as delivering vaccines, creating jobs lost in the pandemic and tackling climate change.

“The world continues to

face an unprecedented crisis due to COVID-19,” said Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki at a virtual, two-day meeting of donors hosted by Japan. “Now is the time for global solidarity.”

The World Bank separately announced that it has decided on its largest ever replenishment package of \$93 billion for the fund.

Replenishments are normally provided to the IDA once every three years, but the depletion of the fund amid the pandemic pushed forward the

timeline by one year. In December 2019, donors agreed to make contributions worth a total of \$82 billion.

Japan and other donors together will contribute a total of \$23.5 billion to the IDA this time.

David Malpass, president of the World Bank, said in a statement that the “generous commitment by our partners is a critical step toward supporting poor countries in their efforts to recover from the COVID-19 crisis.”—Kyodo ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

ECB plots stimulus exit as inflation looms

EUROPEAN Central Bank policymakers will gather on Thursday for a crunch meeting, as soaring inflation heaps pressure on the bank to wind down its stimulus just as a new coronavirus variant threatens to derail the recovery.

The Frankfurt-based institution is expected to confirm the planned end of its massive pandemic-era stimulus plan in March, currently hoovering up around 70 billion euros (\$78 billion) worth of assets every month.

The 1.85-trillion-euro pandemic emergency bond-buying programme (PEPP) is the ECB's main crisis-fighting tool, aimed at keeping borrowing costs low to stoke economic growth. The challenge for the ECB's 25-member governing council is finding a way to smooth the transition to avoid upsetting markets or jeopardizing the eurozone's fragile rebound from the initial coronavirus shock.—AFP

Share of German energy from renewables to fall in 2021

THE proportion of Germany's energy derived from renewables is set to fall year-on-year in 2021 for the first time since 1997, federal environment agency UBA said on Wednesday.

Wind turbines, solar plants and other renewable energy sources are projected to generate around 42 per cent of the electricity consumed in Germany this year, the agency said, compared with 45.3 per cent in 2020.

It blamed the “noticeable” drop on higher total electricity consumption in 2021, along with a fall in the amount of electricity generated from renewable sources due to weather conditions.

There had been “very little wind” especially in the first quarter of 2021, the agency said, and the sun had shone “significantly less” than the previous year.—AFP

WTO members to target fossil fuel subsidies, plastic



Thailand has been a WTO member since 1 January 1995. A worker at a gas station fills a motorcycle's petrol tank in Bangkok. **PHOTO: PORNCHAI KITTIVONGSAKUL / AFP/FILE**

DOZENS of countries pledged on Wednesday to intensify efforts to get rid of fossil fuel subsidies and tackle plastics pollution in an effort spearheaded by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The European Union and Britain, but none of the other principal global polluters, were among 45 signatories to a WTO ministerial statement pledging to “seek the rationalization and phase out of inefficient fossil fuel

subsidies”.

US climate envoy John Kerry said last month that trillions of dollars had been spent on subsidising fossil fuels in recent years, labelling the practice “the definition of insanity”.

The WTO statement said ending the subsidies — which can be tax breaks or payments for companies, or measures that cut fuel prices for consumers — would “effectively contribute” to efforts to keep increases in the

global temperature below two degrees Celsius.

China, Russia and the EU — but not the United States — were among 67 signatories pledging to reduce the usage of harmful plastics by ramping up efforts around recycling and development of alternative materials.

A third statement backed by 71 countries including the US and China agreed to intensify work to “expand opportunities for environmentally sustainable trade in an inclusive and transparent way”.

WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said on Wednesday the three statements were “truly a historic moment” for her organization and called on ministers to back up their words with actions.

“There's too much at stake for us to wait decades more for results,” she said.

The text of all three statements encourages other WTO members to join, with EU trade commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis saying they send a “strong political signal”.—AFP ■



Customers eat outside a restaurant in Namdaemun Market in Seoul on 2 November. **PHOTO: AFP**

South Korea to reimpose business curfews to battle Covid surge

SOUTH Korea said Thursday it will reimpose coronavirus curfews on businesses and limit the size of gatherings again as record infections forced the government to pause its plan to live with Covid.

Following a rapid vaccination programme, authorities eased restrictions last month to help boost the Covid-hit economy, removing limits on how long

businesses could stay open.

But new daily infections have more than trebled since then, with a record 7,850 cases reported on Wednesday, and authorities have warned that figure could rise to as many as 20,000 next month.

“We will be able to overcome this critical moment only if we quickly bring the spread under control through strong social

distancing measures,” Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum said Thursday as he announced the fresh curbs. Under the new rules, which come into effect Saturday for an initial two weeks, restaurants, cafe and other nightlife venues will have to close at 9 pm, while other public places such as cinemas and concert halls will be allowed to operate until 10 pm.—AFP ■

Japan's agricultural exports exceed 1 tril. yen for 1st time

THE value of Japanese agriculture, forestry and seafood exports exceeded 1 trillion yen (\$8.7 billion) for the first time this year, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said Thursday.

The export value between January and November totalled 1.06 trillion yen. Matsuno told a press conference that the figure was a "result of the combined efforts of government agencies to promote exports".

"We want to promote the growth of the agriculture, forestry and fishery industries by incorporating demand from overseas markets and stimulate regional economies," Mat-



Japan's exports of agricultural products have grown steadily. PHOTO: JAPAN-AGRITRADING/KYODO

suno said.

Sales were bolstered between January and October by popular products such as beef and Japanese sake, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

The cumulative ex-

port value for that period also included sales of non-agricultural products including pearls and timber.

Online sales also increased as people made purchases for home consumption amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The Japanese government has set goals of 2 trillion yen in exports in 2025 and 5 trillion yen in 2030, and plans to quickly expand exports centred on products that Japan has strengths in. —Kyodo ■

Asian, European traders welcome Fed tilt to fight inflation

ASIAN and European markets rose Thursday and the dollar held gains after the Federal Reserve laid out a more hawkish path by speeding up the taper of its pandemic financial support and indicated a number of interest rate hikes over the coming years.

While the much-anticipated decision spells an end to the age of ultra-loose monetary policy, investors cheered the fact the US central bank had outlined a plan to overcome a months-long surge in inflation that many fear could threat-

en the economic recovery. Policymakers said they would end their bond-buying programme in March, allowing them to begin hiking borrowing costs. A closely watched gauge of likely rate moves suggests they could lift them six times before the end of 2023. The announcement, which met expectations, helped soothe concerns on trading floors that officials were falling behind the curve and risked letting prices run out of control, with some warning of stagflation where economic growth stalls.—AFP ■



The US dollar held Wednesday's gains after the Federal Reserve indicated it would hike interest rates several times as it tries to combat inflation. PHOTO: AFP

Wikipedia creator's computer and NFT auctioned for almost \$1 mn

AN NFT memorializing Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales's first edit on the online reference resource 20 years ago and the computer he used when programming the platform sold for

a total of almost \$1 million at auction Wednesday.

Christie's sold the NFT — Non-Fungible Tokens that are unique digital objects and confer ownership through block-

chain technology — for \$750,000 and the Strawberry iMac for \$187,500. The NFT is of Wikipedia's debut onscreen image when Wales posted the first words, "Hello world."

The Strawberry iMac was the personal computer he "used for development and research at the time of the website's launch on January 15, 2001," Christie's said. —AFP ■

Sotheby's hails record sales in 2021

AUCTION house Sotheby's announced Wednesday that it had enjoyed record annual sales of \$7.3 billion in 2021 as the art market rebounds from the pandemic.

Sotheby's said in a statement it had already made \$6 billion from auctions this year, up 71 per cent on 2020, with 20 auctions still to go. It achieved another \$1.3 billion in private sales. Sotheby's added that its year-to-date consolidated sales of \$7.3 billion represented "the strongest total" in the company's 277-year history.

Sales were boosted by Asian buyers, new collectors, and the Macklowe collection — the world's most expensive to hit the market. Asian collectors

accounted for 46 per cent of bids and purchases of lots over \$5 million.

Sotheby's said the purchase of Alberto Giacometti's "Le Nez" by cryptocurrency entrepreneur Justin Sun for \$78.4 million was symbolic of "an influx of younger, tech-savvy collectors".

The first part of an art collection owned by New York real estate developer Harry Macklowe and his ex-wife Linda Burg that was put on sale after their bitter divorce fetched \$676 million last month.

Non-fungible tokens (NFTs), unique digital objects that confer ownership through blockchain technology, contributed almost \$100 million.—AFP ■

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Notice to call Special General Meeting of First Japan Tire Services Company Limited (the "Company") for shares buy-back

Notice is hereby given as required by Section 121 (d) of the Myanmar Companies Law that:

- (1) the Company incorporated in Myanmar with Certificate of Incorporation No. 116261758 and having its registered office at PS#3, No.1503, 15th Floor, Sakura Tower, 339 Bogyoke Aung San Road, Kyauktada Township, Yangon Region, Myanmar will call a Special General Meeting of the Company ("SGM") to consider and, if thought fit, to approve the selective buy-back of shares ("Shares Buy-Back"), and
- (2) the Company had filed the Notice of SGM and associated documents with regard to the Shares Buy-Back to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration through Myanmar Companies Online (MyCO).

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY HOLIDAY NOTICE

AS the wharves, warehouses and chellan Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the following of Gazette Holidays Loading, Unloading and delivery for Goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

- (1) 24th December 2021 (Substitute of Christmas Day)
- (2) 25th December 2021 (Christmas Day)
- (3) 31st December 2021 (New Year Pre Day)
- (4) 2nd January 2022 (KAYIN New Year Day)
- (5) 4th January 2022 (Independence Day)

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Statement of Correction and Apology to Mann Yadanarpon Airlines

On November 26 at 7pm Popular News Journal published an article with the headline "Cancellation of a Domestic Airline" on its Facebook page, Telegram channel and website.

We mistakenly quoted the source stating the Myanmar Companies Law and the Bankruptcy Law, along with the subject. There were no other ill intentions of purposes.

The Popular News Journal sincerely apologizes to Mann Yadanarpon Airlines for the misrepresentation of facts.

Mann Yadanarpon Airlines is operated by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), with their airline symbols of 7Y and MYP, and are holding direct flights from Yangon-Thandwe, Yangon-Sittwe, Yangon-Heho, Yangon-Kyaing Tong. Buyers who have purchased tickets, booked tickets, and would like to buy tickets can freely do so.

Popular News Journal.

NEWS
IN BRIEF

UN chief says cross-border aid to Syria rebel bastion vital

CROSS-border humanitarian aid to Syria remains vital, the United Nations Secretary-General said in an internal report Tuesday, as a UN authorization allowing aid into rebel-held areas in the country's northwest without approval from Damascus is set to expire.

A rare moment of cooperation between the United States and Russia in July allowed for a six-month extension of activity at Bab al-Hawa, the only border crossing through which aid reaches the rebel stronghold of Idlib province. That authorization is due to expire on 10 January.

"Cross-border assistance remains lifesaving for millions of people in need in north-west Syria," Antonio Guterres said in a confidential document obtained by AFP, adding that over four million people were in need of crucial assistance across the country.—AFP ■

New York to have first female police chief ever

NEW YORK will appoint Keechant Sewell as its first-ever woman police chief to head the largest force in the country, US media reported Tuesday, at a time when the city's trust in law enforcement has been shattered.

Sewell, who will also be only the third Black person in the post, will have to restore community trust in a police department that has faced accusations of harboring violent, racist and corrupt officers in its ranks. Former police officer and Democratic mayor-elect Eric Adams, who will be the city's second Black mayor, announced the key appointment two weeks before formally taking office on 1 January 2022, with security one of the main issues during his campaign.

"Keechant Sewell is a proven crime fighter with the experience and emotional intelligence to deliver both the safety New Yorkers need and the justice they deserve," Adams told The New York Post.—AFP ■

Southern Thai dance form 'nora' gets UNESCO heritage status

DANCERS moved gracefully in a circle, their beaded dress pieces swaying as they struck bird-like poses in a dance-drama known as "nora"— a southern Thai performance art which was added Wednesday to UNESCO's prestigious heritage list.

The dramatic art form — combining dancing, singing and storytelling — has roots in India, and has been practised in Thailand's Muslim-majority southernmost provinces for centuries.

Performances are usually a dramatic retelling of the tale of a local prince who tries to rescue Manora — a half-human, half-bird princess, whose shortened name gives the art its name.

The ultra-elaborate showcases can last for up to three days. UNESCO on Wednesday officially listed nora as Thailand's "Intangible Cultural Heritage" — a move that could potentially bring more global recognition to a dance typically only seen in small village gatherings in the kingdom's south. In Narathiwat province's



Dancers take part in a "nora" performance, a form of traditional folk dance, in Sungai Padi district in the southern province of Narathiwat on Saturday, ahead of UNESCO officially listing the art form as Thailand's "Intangible Cultural Heritage". PHOTO: AFP

Su-ngai Padi district — not far from Malaysia's border — young dancers on Saturday carefully pulled on their costumes, with lines of beads strung together in a kaleidoscopic display of colours

and patterns.

The backs of their dress pieces swooped upwards, mimicking a bird's tail.

"Nora is important to southerners for two reasons — first, it

is for entertainment... the dance conveys messages which teaches people to do good for good karma," said Vichien Rattanaboono, president of the province's dance group.—AFP ■



Previously, EU arrivals had to show proof of vaccination, recent recovery or a negative test. PHOTO: AFP

Italy tightens border rules for EU arrivals

ITALY will tighten restrictions for arrivals from the rest of the EU from Thursday, requiring coronavirus tests of everyone and a five-day quarantine for those who are not vaccinated.

Previously, EU arrivals had to show proof of vaccination, recent recovery or a negative test.

The decree signed by Health Minister Roberto Speranza late on 14 December "provides for the obligation of a negative test on departure for all arrivals from European Union countries", a spokesperson said.

"For the unvaccinated, in

addition to the negative test, a five-day quarantine is planned."

Unvaccinated people arriving from outside the bloc must already quarantine, and tests are required of those with jobs.

The new measures, valid from 16 December to 31 January, come as Europe battles a fresh wave of coronavirus infections sparked by the spread of the new Omicron variant. Early data suggests it can be resistant to vaccines and is more transmissible than the Delta variant, which currently accounts for the bulk of the world's coronavirus cases.—AFP ■

11 Indonesians dead, 25 missing in Malaysia boat sinking

AT least 11 Indonesian migrants died and 25 are believed to be missing after a boat sank Wednesday in stormy weather off southern Malaysia, authorities said.

Indonesians looking for work sometimes try to enter neighbouring Malaysia illegally by making sea crossings in rickety boats, and accidents happen regularly.

The vessel, believed to be carrying 50 migrants, went down in the morning off Malaysia's southern state of Johor, the coastguard said, correcting an earlier figure of 60 it released.

Soldiers on patrol discovered the bodies of seven men and four women on the shore, coastguard chief Admiral Mohamad Zubil Mat Som told AFP.

Another 14 people were found alive following the voyage from a nearby Indonesian island, and have been taken into custody, the coastguard said.

Those missing are believed to have fled into hiding or drowned, and authorities have deployed boats and an aircraft to hunt for them. "We deeply regret this deadly tragedy," Mohamad Zubil told AFP. "I urge migrants not to enter Malaysia illegally."—AFP ■



Malaysian soldiers bring the boat to shore after it capsized off the coast of Johor. PHOTO: MALAYSIAN ARMED FORCES/AFP

Putin willing to join opening ceremony of Beijing Olympics

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin expressed willingness to attend the opening ceremony of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics during his virtual summit on Wednesday with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, Russia's TASS news agency reported.

Putin's remarks come as the United States and some other democratic countries such as Britain and Australia intend to implement a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Games slated for February next year.

"I expect that we will finally be able to meet in-person in Beijing next February. As we agreed earlier, we will

hold talks before attending the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games," Putin was quoted by the news agency as telling Xi.

Japan, a close US ally that has heavily relied on China in economic terms, is also considering not sending Cabinet ministers to the Beijing Olympics, in line with the US-led diplomatic boycott amid mounting criticism over China's alleged human rights abuses.

With Putin pledging to join the ceremony of the Beijing Games and South Korean President Moon Jae In vowing not to mull a diplomatic boycott, the world could be



Chinese President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, inspects the National Ski Jumping Center in Zhangjiakou, north China's Hebei Province, 19 Jan 2021. PHOTO: XINHUA/JU PENG

divided into two groups in the event, foreign affairs experts warn.—Kyodo ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

US releases trove of secret files on Kennedy assassination

US authorities released thousands of pages of secret documents Wednesday on president John F. Kennedy's assassination, a case that still fuels conspiracy theories despite the official conclusion he was shot by Lee Harvey Oswald.

The CIA and FBI files show US investigators spread their net wide and deep to find out if Oswald conspired with others in the 22 November 1963 murder that shocked the world.

Documents show they chased down myriad leads, from Soviet intelligence to African communist groups and the Italian mafia.

The papers also show the extensive US efforts to spy on and influence the communist government of Fidel Castro in Cuba, where Oswald had contacts and which Kennedy had sought to overthrow. The 1,491 files, many of them lengthy reports, were posted on the JFK Assassination Records page of the National Archives, which already has tens of thousands of listings related to Kennedy's death and the investigation that followed.—AFP ■

Denmark to rent 300 prison cells from Kosovo

DENMARK plans to rent from Kosovo prison cells for 300 inmates due to be expelled at the end of their sentences, the Danish government said Wednesday. The project, which seeks to ease prison overcrowding, will also see Denmark's prison estate expanded by 326 places between 2022 and 2025, the Danish justice ministry said in a statement. In 2020, some 350 inmates were due to be deported at the end of their sentences.

Denmark's prison population has grown 19 per cent since 2015, reaching more than 4,000 inmates at the start of 2021, exceeding 100 per cent of capacity according to official statistics.

In the same period the number of wardens shrank 18 per cent in the Scandinavian nation of 5.8 million people which is known for its open prisons for inmates with sentences of less than five years.—AFP ■

Macron teases future 'ambitions' as election looms

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron declared his future "ambitions" for the country but declined to formally declare he was running for a second term in a lengthy prime-time TV interview on Wednesday that saw him defend his record as an economic reformer.

After a rare two-hour press conference last week to outline his European ambitions, the 43-year-old head of state sat down with journalists from the TF1 channel as campaigning ahead of next April's vote heats up.

"If your question is 'are you looking ahead?', do you have



Macron sat down for a lengthy TV interview seen as part campaigning efforts before next year's election. PHOTO: AFP

ambitions for our country, for French people beyond next April?'. Clearly," the centrist

replied when asked if he would be running for another five-year term.

"I never thought that we could do everything in five years," he said during the interview which was pre-recorded but broadcast on Wednesday evening.

But he argued he needed to stay focused on governing before giving a "firm and sincere response" about his candidacy to the country.

As well as his recent media work, the country's youngest-ever president when elected in 2017 has also been touring small-town and rural France in recent weeks in what has resembled grassroots campaigning.—AFP ■

British PM faces crucial vote in party heartland

UNDER-FIRE British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Thursday faced another crucial

test of his leadership with a by-election in a constituency always won by his party, where

defeat would intensify calls for a new leader.

Johnson, 57, is already reeling after around 100 of his own MPs on Tuesday broke ranks and voted against government plans to introduce vaccine passes for large events.

It follows a torrid few weeks for the leader, whose authority has been hit by claims of corruption and reports that he and his staff broke coronavirus restrictions last Christmas.

In normal times, a by-election in the rural English constituency of North Shropshire would be a formality for Johnson's Conservative Party, which has never lost the seat.

The constituency, which

has just over 80,000 voters, returned its last Tory lawmaker with a whopping 23,000 majority.

But ahead of polls opening at 0700 GMT, Johnson is struggling to convince many to stick with him after weeks of bad headlines, prompting predictions of a historic loss.

The poll, which closes at 2200 GMT, is increasingly seen as a referendum on Johnson's premiership, just two years after his landslide general election victory in December 2019.

Defeat would likely see MPs start filing letters of no-confidence in their leader, which could trigger an internal party vote to remove him.—AFP ■



A pedestrian walks past Christmas decorations in a shop in Whitchurch, central England, ahead of a by-election in the North Shropshire constituency tomorrow. PHOTO: AFP

Klopp won't buy cover for Liverpool's African Nations stars

JURGEN Klopp has ruled out a move into the transfer market to cover for the Liverpool stars set to take part in the African Nations Cup.

Liverpool are set to lose the services of Egypt forward Mohamed Salah, Senegal winger Sadio Mane and Guinea midfielder Naby Keita when the tournament gets under way in Cameroon.

In a major blow to Liverpool's hopes of winning the Premier League title, Klopp could be without that trio from 9 January to 6 February.

But the Reds boss, whose second-placed side host Newcastle on Thursday, has no plans to make stand-in signings when the transfer window opens on 1 January. "We knew three would be qualified and be there and we knew that at least two of them will go pretty far in the tourna-



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp. PHOTO: AFP

ment," Klopp told reporters on Wednesday.

"Can you be prepared for something like that, properly, perfectly? Like a one-for-one replacement for Sadio, a replacement for Mo, one replacement for Naby?"

"That's tricky in each situation but I am happy with the

squad and we have options to play and still to play football.

"We are quite confident we will find solutions." Klopp accepts Liverpool may not be at their best without Salah, who has been in sublime form this season, and Mane, who is back to his best after a dip last term.—AFP ■

Haaland brace sinks Fuerth as Dortmund trim Bayern's league lead



Erling Haaland celebrates his second goal for Dortmund on Wednesday. PHOTO: AFP

ERLING Haaland scored twice Wednesday as Borussia Dortmund trimmed Bayern Munich's lead at the top of the Bundesliga table to six points with a 3-0 win over bottom side Greuther Fuerth.

Haaland struck either side of half-time before Dutch striker Donyell Malen grabbed Dortmund's late third goal.

The home victory allows Dortmund to peg back the

points gap behind Bayern, who remain on course for a 10th straight league title after thumping Stuttgart 5-0 on Tuesday.

Haaland has scored 19 goals in 15 games for Dortmund this season and the towering Norwegian again shone at Signal Iduna Park.

His early well-timed pass in the box saw Thorgan Hazard hit the net, but the goal was ruled

offside.

Haaland then converted a first-half penalty and headed in a Julian Brandt free-kick eight minutes from time before replacement Malen fired in Dortmund's third goal, also from Brandt's final pass.

Dortmund are also six points ahead of third-placed Leverkusen, who were held to a 2-2 draw at home by Hoffenheim on Wednesday.—AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

- To build a Union based on democracy and federalism, through a disciplined and genuine multiparty democratic system that is fair and just.
- To emphasize the achievement of enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).
- To continue implementing the principle of peaceful co-existence among countries through an independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy.

2. Economic affairs

- To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.
- To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
- To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

- To ensure a strong and dynamic Union spirit, the genuine spirit of patriotism.
- To respect and promote the customs and traditions of all National peoples and preserve and safeguard their cultural heritage and national characteristics.
- To enhance the health, fitness and education quality of the entire nation.

Thiem cancels Abu Dhabi return, hopes for ATP Cup

DOMINIC Thiem said Wednesday that he plans to return to competitive tennis in Australia in January after cancelling his participation at an exhibition tournament in Abu Dhabi this week.

"The ATP Cup is definitely the goal now. I hope I will be able to play there... I'm optimistic," the 2020 US Open champion told reporters.

The 28-year-old said his wrist had fully healed from an injury – that had kept him off the

court since August – but he had yet to overcome a mental block when he is hitting the ball.

"The whole process is going according to plan. I am pain free. But I lag behind in training. I only go on the court when I can do 100 per cent of the forehand, and I am currently at 80," he said.

The Austrian said he was currently back to training several hours a day but has not yet played against any of his teammates, leading him to call off competing at Mubadala World Tennis Championship this week. Thiem said he would fly from Abu Dhabi to Sydney later this month. After the ATP Cup, Thiem plans to compete in the first Grand Slam of 2022 at the Australian Open.

At the ATP Cup in Sydney, he is scheduled to play the opening match against defending champion and world number two Daniil Medvedev on 2 January.—AFP ■



Dominic Thiem of Austria aiming for Aussie return. PHOTO: AFP